

MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE
Lansing Center
Room 205
333 E. Michigan Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48933

MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 14, 2008

PRESENT:

James Byrum, Chairperson (a.m. session)
Dale Norton, Vice Chairperson
Ann Jousma-Miller, Secretary
Don Coe, Commission of Agriculture
Todd Regis, Commission of Agriculture (via teleconference)
Don Koivisto, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Byrum called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture to order at 10:02 a.m. on Monday, January 14, 2008. Commissioner Jousma-Miller called the roll with Commissioners Byrum, Norton, Coe, Regis, Jousma-Miller, and Director Koivisto present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was noted one item had recently been added to the agenda, the Bovine Tuberculosis Issues Update.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED APPROVAL OF THE
JANUARY 14, 2008, AGENDA. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER
NORTON. MOTION CARRIED.**

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 7, 2007, MEETING MINUTES

The Commissioners noted two corrections for the minutes: correction to location of the next scheduled meeting and notation that the December 2007 meeting was not held; and one spelling correction on page nine.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE
NOVEMBER 7, 2007, MEETING MINUTES WITH NOTED CHANGES.
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER. MOTION
CARRIED.**

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting will be held on February 13, 2008, at Constitution Hall; it will follow a meeting of the Lansing Agriculture Club to be held at the

Radisson Hotel, at which the minority leaders of the House and Senate have been invited to speak.

2008 AMENDED MEETING SCHEDULE

The amended 2008 Meeting Schedule was reviewed: January 14 (Lansing Center); February 13 (Constitution Hall); March 19 (Constitution Hall); April 16 (Constitution Hall); July 17 (Geagley Lab); August 20 (Constitution Hall); September 16 (TBD); November 12 (Constitutional Hall); and December 9 (TBD). There currently is no determination of what the September 16 meeting will be; it is recognized that tours are a good opportunity when feasible.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2008 PROPOSED MEETING DATES. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER. MOTION CARRIED.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

MOTION: COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER NOMINATED COMMISSIONER JIM BYRUM AS CHAIRPERSON. COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO CAST A UNANIMOUS BALLOT. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER REGIS NOMINATED COMMISSIONER ANN JOUSMA-MILLER AS VICE CHAIRPERSON. COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED TO CAST A UNANIMOUS BALLOT. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER REGIS. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER ANN JOUSMA-MILLER NOMINATED COMMISSIONER NORTON AS SECRETARY. COMMISSIONER REGIS MOVED TO CAST A UNANIMOUS BALLOT. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER COE. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL

Commissioner Coe noted he attended the Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable Expo in Grand Rapids on December 4, 2007. He also traveled for today's meeting.

Commissioner Ann Jousma-Miller noted she traveled for today's meeting.

Commissioner Norton noted he attended the Equine Conference on December 12, 2007, in East Lansing, and the Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable Expo in Grand Rapids on December 4, 2007. He also traveled for today's meeting.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED APPROVAL OF COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER COE. MOTION CARRIED.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Jousma-Miller reported six meetings were held with producers in December to introduce a Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) eradication effort in the Upper Peninsula. Pfizer is providing a \$50,000 grant through Michigan State University (MSU) to fund this partnership effort, which includes MSU Animal Health and College of Veterinary Medicine, MSU Extension, Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The BVD effort will be initiated during the month of January, which represents the first-ever program of this type in the U.S. If the program proves successful, eradication efforts would be initiated in other areas throughout the United States.

She noted Cleveland-Cliffs, Inc., is making a considerable renewable fuels investment by recently expanding operations at their Battle Creek facility. Plans are also underway to construct additional production facilities in Michigan, Minnesota, and other Midwest states. The U.P. is excited about their biomass technology and is interested to learn where they choose to establish a new plant.

Additionally, she mentioned the U.P. is very much involved in the New Page Paper Mill pre-feasibility study, which will be completed by the end of January.

Also, several meetings are planned this spring for producers, including the "Ag for Tomorrow" conference.

Commissioner Norton noted there is considerable concern in the livestock industry relative to rising feed costs. Hog prices had a bearish report, with supply being significant. The vaccine now available for the hog disease Porcine Circovirus has also contributed to the additional hog numbers.

He mentioned his family is involved in the bio-diesel plant in Bangor, which has struggled with input costs and is changing focus to produce green fertilizers.

Commissioner Coe attended the annual meeting of the newly formed Farm Market and Agriculture Tourism Association. The key challenge facing those businesses involves restrictions placed on their businesses by local government through zoning ordinances, with which a type of future "right to process" or "right to market" Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practice (GAAMP) could potentially assist. While in Grand Rapids, he also attended the Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable Expo and the Industry Luncheon, at which the keynote speaker was Director Koivisto.

On December 6, 2007, he made a presentation on the agriculture sector during the Traverse City Regional Chamber Annual Retreat, which included area representatives from various industry sectors. The ties between tourism and agriculture in that area of the state are immediately apparent.

On December 13, 2007, Commissioner Coe attended the Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation meeting, at which Director Koivisto gave a presentation on agriculture.

He reported the issue of animal identification (ID) tagging is still of concern in their area and there has been a constant stream of articles in weekly and local newspapers, as well as radio coverage, highlighting operators' objections to ID tagging of their animals. It was noted that Michigan and national news media should also focus on the critical necessity of tagging in the ultimate protection of public health and the industry itself.

He noted the Northwest Orchard and Vineyard Show will begin January 15; representatives from the department and the Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council will be in attendance.

Also, he will be attending a small farm conference in Grayling on January 26.

Commissioner Regis congratulated Commissioner Jousma-Miller on her recent reappointment by the Governor to the Commission of Agriculture.

He attended the Fruit and Vegetable Expo in December and noted the comments made by Director Koivisto at the Industry Luncheon were most appropriate.

Also, he attended a meeting with MDA and the Food Export Association that focused on a computer management marketing program. He added that he feels comfortable with the direction and activities in which Jamie Zitko-Somers is involved and looks forward to the future evolvement of the program.

Commissioner Byrum noted a record 1,000 individuals registered for this week's Michigan Agri-Business Association (MABA) Winter Conference, which confirms there is considerable interest in today's agriculture industry. The current greatest challenge to agriculture is risk – risk on every side predicated on the cost of agronomy and the inputs. Today, China and India use more fertilizer than the U.S.; fertilizer demand has increased roughly equal to total U.S. demand. The growth in the agriculture industry is astounding and it is an opportune time to be in the business.

He reported legislative work continues on the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) package, water use, and renewable fuels. (The department is sponsoring a Methane Conference on January 15 as a co-partner of this week's MABA event.)

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Koivisto announced effective February 1, 2008, Deb Merrill is transferring to a new position with the department's Emergency Management Services, and Cheri Ayers will assume the responsibility of Commission activities and meetings. He acknowledged and thanked Deb for her great service to the Commission throughout the past few years; the Commission added their appreciation to Deb.

He also announced Liesl Clark has returned from leave. She will be working with Nancy Nyquist on legislative affairs and assuming a major role in directing efforts on the renewable fuels initiative. The Renewable Fuels Commission has been resurrected and will be meeting in the near future.

Director Koivisto reported the department coordinated an exceptional meeting on January 10, 2008, with over 70 state and national food/agriculture leaders and academia, to discuss the proposed National Center for Food Protection and Applied Research. This initiative has considerable support from Governor Granholm and she asked MDA to take the lead on facilitating this privately-funded project.

He noted the Governor is aware and very supportive of all of the department's recent activities. Major progress has been made with agriculture business developments such as Packerland, Kellogg, and Gerber.

He reported on the recent negative Pet Shop article that appeared in the Detroit Free Press. The article was not comprehensively correct and work progresses toward publishing corrections. Commissioners inquired as to the potential of requesting county animal control officers to assist with monitoring pet shops. The department will review the statute and pursue the potential of this proposal.

Relative to the animal ID tag issue, he concurred that more media explanation is needed and efforts will be made in that direction. The vast majority of the industry supports the ID tag program and what it accomplishes. Michigan has received national recognition for accomplishments with its animal ID program.

He reported Gordon Wenk will be handling the GAAMPs issue as related to marketing and tourism and how it affects the Right to Farm (RTF) program.

Director Koivisto emphasized that Renewafuel, LLC activities in Michigan are very exciting for Michigan's future. He added that Cleveland Cliff's goal is to expand rapidly in Michigan.

He spoke briefly relative to upcoming meetings, including efforts in the Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) program area.

Legislatively, he noted hearings will begin this week in the House on the dairy bill, the focus being to adopt federal standards. Senate Bill 682 will be taken up by the House; it creates a licensing program for businesses that sell agricultural pesticides if the business is not already licensed as a restricted-use pesticide dealer.

He spoke briefly regarding the recent meeting with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the effective system developed to work jointly on agriculture business creation and expansion opportunities in Michigan.

Commissioner Byrum added that MABA estimates in the next twelve months, their members will invest approximately \$200 million in Michigan's economy through construction expansion and new initiatives.

Director Koivisto mentioned more information is being received relative to the budget; however, a cut is still anticipated.

DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL

Director Koivisto plans to travel to Washington, D.C., February 7-10, 2008, to attend the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JOUSMAMILLER. MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment relative to agenda items.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: Brad Deacon, Emergency Management Coordinator

Mr. Deacon distributed a summary of the 2007 activities of the Emergency Management Program, which focused on three major goals: 1) employee safety and protection; 2) outreach to southeast Michigan; and 3) animals and emergencies issues. He reported 2007 brought increased and improved department coordination of emergency response activities, greater integration within programs, and building of expertise and capacity, despite having significant resource challenges. Creative leverage of available non-state funding

was utilized to conduct very positive training sessions, emergency drills, and purchase of personal safety equipment.

He also shared a summary of planned activities for 2008, which will focus on four major goals: 1) food and agriculture vulnerability; 2) animal health prevention and response; 3) employee safety and protection; and 4) National Incident Management System/Incident Command System integration and compliancy. He highlighted upcoming activities, including the January 16 Food and Agriculture Border Gateway Summit and the Food Supply and Pandemics exercise on January 24. An on-going activities summary was also provided.

Commissioner Coe asked if there were any imminent threats to the nation of which the Commission should be aware. Mr. Deacon reported there currently is nothing threatening in the food sector; however, agri-terrorism remains an issue of vigilance. The disease threat of Avian Influenza is being monitored for early detection and rapid response should it be detected in our country.

Commissioner Norton reported the Swine Welfare Committee is sponsoring a workshop in the near future to address issues of animal welfare as related to truck roll-overs. Mr. Deacon noted in April, MSU is hosting a "Be Aware, Be Prepared" Animal Handling seminar.

The Commission recognized and thanked Brad Deacon for his excellent efforts in promoting and improving the department's critical emergency management efforts.

AGRICULTURE PROCESSING RENAISSANCE ZONE DESIGNATION: Patricia Lockwood, Special Projects Director and Robert Craig, Director, Agriculture Development Division

Ms. Lockwood and Mr. Craig presented the Agricultural Processing Renaissance Zone (APRZ) request by the City of Battle Creek and Kellogg Company. Ms. Lockwood noted MDA is part of a team that joined forces with MEDC, along with Kellogg Company and Battle Creek Unlimited, to present this application. This would be the 20th agricultural processing renaissance zone recommended by the Commission.

The proposed length of term for this APRZ is ten years, starting January 1, 2009. Kellogg plans to expand their research, development, and innovation activities at W.K. Kellogg Institute (WKKI) for their diverse food company, the results of which will be utilized world-wide. This project would represent a substantial positive impact on Michigan's economy.

The \$54 million project would add 16,000 square feet to the current WKKI facility for the Food and Nutrition pilot plant and nearly double the office space, adding

80,000 square feet. An additional 300 workspaces will be created at the expanded facility. This provides the potential for anticipated new jobs, as well as job retention. Construction on the 19.97-acre parcel is slated to begin by the end of 2008 and operations will commence in 2009. It represents a \$40 million investment by Kellogg in real property and \$14 million in personal property.

Being a global company, Mr. Craig noted the department is very pleased Kellogg decided to locate this facility in Michigan, even though they could have located elsewhere in the U.S. or overseas. Currently 18% of Kellogg's commodities are obtained from Michigan. This project will only enhance their economic impact on the state.

In response to question by Commissioner Coe, Ms. Lockwood confirmed that no parties expressed any objection or concern with this project proposal. Commissioner Byrum noted this expansion will create value-added stabilization for Kellogg in Michigan's business economy; and added its appreciation to Kellogg for consideration of Michigan for this expansion.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGRICULTURAL PROCESSING RENAISSANCE ZONE REQUEST BY THE CITY OF BATTLE CREEK AND KELLOGG COMPANY. COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER SECONDED.

SECRETARY-ELECT COMMISSIONER NORTON CONDUCTED A ROLL-CALL VOTE. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Commission noted this is a classic example of the impact the Agricultural Processing Renaissance Zones can exert on Michigan's economy. The Legislature is commended for its foresight in creating these opportunities.

JULIAN-STILLE AGRICULTURE INNOVATION GRANT PROJECTS: Robert Craig, Director, Agriculture Development Division and Mike DiBernardo, Grants Coordinator, Agriculture Development Division

Mr. Craig noted it was almost 18 months ago when the Michigan Legislature, as part of the 21st Century Jobs Fund, provided \$5 million in grants under the Agriculture Innovation Grant Program.

Mr. DiBernardo provided an update on the Agriculture Innovation Grant Program, noting the goal of the program is to establish, retain, expand, and attract or develop value-added processing and production operations in Michigan. In October of 2006, MDA awarded grants for 40 proposals. To date, we have granted \$4.7 million and 10 of the 40 grantees have completed their projects. Those grantees have infused a private investment of \$7.9 million in these projects, of which MDA has paid out \$1.1 million; thus, leveraging private funds

with this program at a 7:1 ratio. Public interest is high for a future grant program. A web site link was created on the MDA Internet to report on the grantee success stories and can be found at the following site:

<http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125--172563--,00.html>.

The additional 30 grant applicants have until September of 2008 to complete their projects. Commissioner Coe encouraged Commissioners to closely follow the grant projects ongoing in their respective areas.

Director Koivisto confirmed MDA will be coordinating press releases to highlight MDA success stories. Commissioner Byrum suggested a synopsis of these developments be presented to the Legislature through the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees.

Director Koivisto reported MDA is currently encouraging the Legislature to continue funding the Julian-Stille Value Added Program as a grant program.

COMMISSION RESOLUTIONS

Chairperson Byrum reviewed two resolutions before the Commission: 1) to recognize Vicki Hafner-Marble upon her retirement from the Animal Industry Division after more than 35 dedicated years with the State of Michigan; and 2) to recognize Douglas L. McDougal upon his retirement from the Food and Dairy Division after 35 years as a public servant.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER REGIS MOVED THE RESOLUTIONS FOR VICKI HAFNER-MARBLE AND DOUGLAS L. McDOUGAL BE ADOPTED WITH BEST WISHES FOR THEIR LONG AND HEALTHY RETIREMENTS. COMMISSIONER NORTON SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

ADJOURNMENT FOR LUNCH

Chairperson Byrum adjourned the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

MEETING RECONVENED

Chairperson-elect, Ann Jousma-Miller reconvened the meeting at 1:47 p.m. Chairman Byrum was called away and was unable to rejoin the meeting.

MICHIGAN AND THE BIO-ECONOMY: Dr. Steve Pueppke, Director, Office of Bio-based Technologies, Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station

Dr. Pueppke gave a presentation on the bio-economy in Michigan and what might be expected in the future. Today, renewable fuel in the minds of the public is corn ethanol. Tomorrow, we will replace our simple corn ethanol plants with infinitely more complex bio-refineries, which will process a wide variety of cellulosic raw materials, from willows and switch grass to recycled paper and

forest waste. These bio-refineries will not only create ethanol motor fuels, but other products as well, including oils, lubricants, fabrics and materials, and potentially power as well. Each of those materials serves to enhance the value proposition.

The cellulosic raw material is abundant and inexpensive; however, its complexity creates a challenge to the industry. The energy bill, which the President signed last month, demonstrates the expectation that industry will solve the technology challenges and rapidly increase the amount of cellulose to bio-fuels availability. This should be an impetus to everyone in Michigan. The challenge for Michigan is more than just technological; the critical bio-refinery value chain must be addressed, representing a complex mix of logistics to deliver the raw materials to the plant, and once produced, to deliver product to the users.

There is potential for immense economic impact, which includes a regional systems impact as well. Numerous groups have questions, including Michigan farmers, bio-refinery entrepreneurs, and conservationists. We need to develop systems responsibly – maintaining our ability to produce food, maintaining wildlife habitat, and at the same time, addressing these wonderful new opportunities.

There exists a real opportunity for Michigan in the development of cellulosic fuel. The path is unclear, but it will be moving forward; and the industry must also have sustained political support.

Commissioner Coe asked what role Dr. Pueppke predicts MSU will play in the development of this bio-economy dialog. He noted MSU tends to be considered a technological resource, but can also assist with the critical systems issue to ensure it has no negative effect on the rest of the agricultural system.

In response to a question from Director Koivisto, Dr. Pueppke reported at least one bio-refinery plant is currently in the planning stages; and with cost being the only issue, he predicted within 5-10 years, there could be a significant supply of cellulosic fuel on the market. He added that a considerable opportunity exists for Michigan's small, rural communities in the processing of cellulosic raw materials.

The Commission invited Dr. Pueppke to return to the Commission in the future to present information on the development of other bio-energy sources.

NORMAL AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (NAPs): Dr. Steven Halstead, State Veterinarian; Steve Shine, Program Manager, Conservation Programs, Environmental Stewardship Division

Mr. Shine provided background relative to the Wildlife Conservation Act and the Normal Agricultural Practices. In 1999, the Governor approved an amendment to the Wildlife Conservation Act, which established definitions of "bait, baiting, feed,

and feeding,” along with the conditions for each. The Normal Agricultural Practices were developed by a diverse group of stakeholders and producers to provide producers and growers with compliance assistance information. This document was approved by the Commission of Agriculture in 2000.

Mr. Shine reported last year, the Federal Review and the Memorandum of Understanding for the Bovine Tuberculosis Program requested these Normal Agricultural Practices be reviewed and revised as necessary. The same entities reconvened and developed the draft presented to the Commission today for consideration.

Mr. Shine highlighted the proposed changes in the Normal Agricultural Practices. The definition of “deer and elk” was simplified throughout; options for hay and forage storage site selection were emphasized; grain/silage and hay rack/feed bunk security was strengthened; reference to feeding facilities was broadened; and references to by-product, culled, and unmarketable commodity management practices were strengthened and clarified.

In response to inquiry by Commissioner Coe, Mr. Shine confirmed producers were included in the review process and there were no substantial objections from that community. He also noted this provides a method to help producers define what is normal and what is abnormal in the baiting and feeding issue.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT NORMAL AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER NORTON. MOTION CARRIED.

Dr. Halstead noted this represents just one of the tools for addressing the challenges in the TB Modified Accredited Zone (MAZ) and was an important step in meeting the recommendations made by the USDA.

DEER FEEDING ISSUE: Kenneth Rauscher, Director, Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division and Dr. Steve Halstead, State Veterinarian

In response to the Commission’s request at their November 7, 2007, meeting, Mr. Rauscher reviewed background, options, and challenges relative to the sale of deer feed issue. He noted the first issue involves products being marketed as baits or attractants, with no nutritional claims made or implied, that are not considered commercial feed, and as such, are not regulated by the department. The option of broadening the scope of the statute to include certain animal feed was reviewed.

The second issue noted by Mr. Rauscher is that products meeting the definition of a commercial feed are regulated with the current authority of the statute, but

current authority does not allow us to prohibit sale and distribution of these products. Reviewed was the option of amending the statute to prohibit sales and distribution of commercial feed use for deer/elk feeding in any area of the state where such feeding is banned.

Mr. Rauscher noted the third issue involves deer feed products being sold throughout the state and the inability to prevent purchases from other areas being transported into an area of concern. The option of amending the statute to require labels and/or signage for deer/elk feed was discussed.

The challenges presented by any of these options were discussed, the key issues being enforceability and availability of resources. Dr. Halstead noted that difficulty of enforcement and cultural resistance present significant challenges in the Modified Accredited Zone (MAZ) area. Mr. Rauscher and Dr. Halstead confirmed they would like to continue reviewing the situation and work toward developing solutions.

The Commission confirmed further effort toward developing potential solutions is prudent at this point.

**DNR PERMITTING PROCESS: Dr. Steve Schmitt, Veterinarian in Charge,
Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

Dr. Schmitt provided an update on disease control permits to assist producers in management of deer on their property. In November, the Natural Resources Commission expanded their program to make more permits available. Five disease-control permits were issued to each of the 664 cattle producers in the Bovine Tuberculosis five-county area and additional permits will be issued if needed. The program will run throughout the calendar years of 2008, 2009, and 2010; the program will then be re-evaluated. The remainder of MAZ producers may also obtain permits; and he explained the requirements being placed on the producers under those permits. Additionally, letters have been sent to approximately 100 large non-agricultural land owners in Deer Management Unit 452 to ascertain their interest in participating in the disease control permit program.

In response to questions from Commissioner Norton, Dr. Schmitt reported there have been some objections from the hunting community and, although they do not expect any cause for concern, those are being addressed as they arise.

The Commission suggested that next year, the disease permit letter to producers be sent from both the directors of Agriculture and Natural Resources to establish Agriculture's involvement and support of the program.

Next, Dr. Schmitt reported relative to the deer surveillance program, noting over 8,000 deer, 160 elk, and 8 moose have been tested for bovine tuberculosis. The moose and elk were all negative, 11 deer cultured positive, with 14 probable suspects, and 23 of those 25 deer were in the four-county area; the two deer from outside the five-county were from Iosco County. He emphasized this does not necessarily represent a spread of the disease; however, they will be monitoring the situation. Over 161,000 deer in total have been tested and we are approaching over 600 positive-tested deer. The prevalence figures will be published in March. Additionally, testing of live-capture deer in high-prevalence townships began last week.

The Commission suggested a joint meeting between the Commission of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Commission be coordinated for this year.

BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS ISSUES UPDATE: Dr. John Tilden, Project Manager, TB Eradication Review Response

Dr. Tilden provided an update on the Bovine Tuberculosis Program, noting the report from the USDA Bovine TB Program Review Team should be received within the next two weeks. The owner of the Alcona County beef herd has accepted the USDA agreement and depopulation of the farm is in process. The Montmorency County beef herd is being depopulated this week as well.

He noted the objectives as determined by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) if we are to eradicate Bovine TB are: 1) reduce deer numbers to the natural carrying capacity; 2) stop artificial feeding; and 3) gain public support, particularly in the disease area. USDA has clearly stated that our current Bovine TB status is temporary and the burden of change is on our shoulders. What has been accomplished the past ten years has prevented the disease from spreading throughout Michigan, but has not yet been enough to eradicate the disease.

Last week, senior MDA and DNR staff met to discuss options for more effective collaboration during the coming year. It was determined that social sciences need to be added to the biological science consideration as we move forward in our eradication efforts. We are also working toward a partnership with MDA, DNR, and MSU to gather all stakeholders together to address the eradication effort.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MEETING TO FOLLOW

Chairperson-elect Jousma-Miller announced that Director Koivisto, MDA staff representatives, and she will be meeting with conservation district representatives immediately following today's Commission meeting. Other Commissioners and staff are welcome to join that meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dorance Amos, Amos Farms from Elk Rapids, a cherry and apple grower in the Grand Traverse area, advised the Commission of a situation their farm is currently facing with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and provided related documents. Amos Farms began the process of recreating their farms to change production to that of tart cherries. He reviewed the steps taken to date, including obtaining all required permits and the mandatory regulations being followed. In November, DEQ became involved and subsequently issued an order to cease the work process. Mr. Amos discussed details of the situation and noted there also is an apparent discrepancy in interpretation between counties. The delay has inconvenienced him to the point he is unable to plan for next year's plantings.

Mr. Amos asked the Commission to: 1) investigate the situation as described to determine, from an agricultural perspective, the appropriate or inappropriate DEQ involvement, and to advise him on what steps he needs to take in order to solve this problem; and 2) provide him, as well as others involved in production agriculture, with the process and proper steps to take when DEQ staff erroneously involves themselves in farming practices that are either perfectly legal or are exempted for the purpose of agricultural production under law.

Discussion of the situation ensued. In response to a question from Commissioner Coe, Mr. Amos advised that all of the parcels are currently zoned agricultural; and he noted the issue lies solely with DEQ.

The Commission directed the department's Environmental Stewardship Division to review the documents and details of the situation, attempt to help resolve the issues, and report to the Commission at a future meeting.

George Papadelis, Telly's Greenhouse & Garden Center from Troy, reviewed the letter he sent earlier this month to Gordon Wenk, MDA Environmental Stewardship Division, relative to the conflicts between the RTF Act and the City of Troy ordinances as they pertain to the State Construction Code. He reviewed the various issues of conflict that exist within the City of Troy's ordinances and the RTF Act and suggested that a Generally Accepted Agriculture Practice (GAAMP) might be developed to address height and lot coverage for these various types of structures and uses.

To assist with his legal process, which resumes on January 30, 2008, Mr. Papadelis requested a statement from the Commission of Agriculture declaring the City of Troy's ordinances are under evaluation by the Commission due to potential conflicts with the RTF Act. Discussion of the situation ensued.

In response to Mr. Papadelis' questions, Jim Johnson, MDA Environmental Stewardship Division, advised there is language within the GAAMPs that addresses limiting a local unit of government's ability to implement ordinances that infringe on a farmer's ability to conduct farming operations; it is the role of the RTF Program to compare farming practices to the GAAMPs; and the Program does not determine if the farm has RTF protection, that would be a legal determination.

Commissioner Coe offered he could testify, not on behalf of the Commission, but as an agri-business in the State of Michigan.

The Commission directed Gordon Wenk, Director, Environmental Stewardship Division, to continue review of this issue and provide back to the Commission relative to: a review of the RTF Act and what protections it offers; any specific recommendations as related to Telly's Greenhouse; what is happening with other RTF Acts across the country; and what Michigan might expect to face in the future.

Dr. Christopher Peterson, MSU Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources, announced an update to the economic impact number for Michigan's agri-food system. The new number is \$63.7 billion and represents a 2-year update from the previous \$60.1 billion figure. The farming component increased 6.4%; and perhaps even more interesting, the ethanol component increased 700%, to a \$600 million impact on the state. A public announcement of this new figure will be made later this week.

ADJOURN

MOTION: COMMISSIONER REGIS MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER COE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Attachments:

- A – Agenda*
- B – Agriculture Commission Meeting Minutes November 7, 2007*
- C – Amended 2008 Meeting Schedule*
- D – Don Koivisto Upcoming Event Schedule and Issues of Interest*
- E – Emergency Management Program 2007 and 2008 Activities Reports*
- F – Agriculture Processing Renaissance Zone Application*
- G – MDA Agricultural Innovation (Julian-Stille) Grant Projects Update*
- H – Retirement Resolutions for: Douglas L. McDougal and Vicki Hafner-Marble*
- I – Michigan and the Bio-Economy, Dr. Steve Pueppke*
- J – Wildlife Conservation Act Normal Agricultural Practices*
- K – MDA Deer Feeding Proposal*
- L – Public Comment – Letter (with attachments) from Dorance Amos, Amos Farms*
- M – Public Comment – Letter from George Papadelis, Telly's Greenhouse & Garden Center*